

A Proposed Reorganization of the Faculty Governance System

Revised, 9/28/ 2004

I. Introduction

Skidmore's faculty governance system is large and unwieldy. Currently CFG oversees the election and appointment of faculty members to about 75 elective slots and 20 appointive slots on a wide variety of committees, some of which carry very heavy workload, others of which involve only a modest time commitment, and most of which fall somewhere in between. These 95 slots are drawn from a "CFG-eligible-list" of about 240 faculty members. At any given time about one-third of the eligible (i.e., full-time regular) faculty are serving on committees, a system increasingly perceived as a drain on faculty time.

Beyond the sheer numbers, however, is the significant problem that the effort and time spent may not "pay off" when recommendations of a committee seem to have little or no effect on the final decision-making process. Such complaints have been especially aimed at FPPC for years, but various other committees also suffer from the same structural problem. It is frustrating and demoralizing for faculty to be willing to labor in the committee system and then feel that their work has been ignored when decisions are actually made.

Skidmore faculty enjoy a strong tradition of involvement in most institutional planning and decision-making, and it is not at all clear that the faculty really wants this to change in any dramatic way. Indeed, parts of the faculty governance system work quite well. In the broadest sense, CFG believes that the main fault line lies between those committees whose functions are the faculty's primary responsibility and those whose functions are not the faculty's primary responsibility. In general, committees in the former category seem to function quite well, whereas committees in the latter seem more prone to the "hard work to no avail" complaint. Accordingly CFG proposes a reorganization of the governance system that will clarify these two types of functions, leaves the former category of committees as is and substantially revises the latter category. We believe that in so doing we can streamline the system, eliminating a reasonable percentage of elective slots (22 slots out of 75, just over 29%), retaining the best of what we currently have, and improving other parts by bringing the deliberations closer to the real locus of decision-making.

II. The Key Reorganization Principles

- Faculty committees are defined in this proposal as those committees whose functions are the primary responsibility of the faculty (e.g., CAPT, CEPP, Faculty Development Committee, etc.). Such committees will not in general be altered under this reorganization. Committees whose functions are broader (financial issues, admissions issues, student affairs issues, etc.) are in this proposal defined as “all-college” committees. See Section III.
- The all-college component of the governance system needs a central deliberative body. The reorganization will change the IPC (currently a faculty committee) to the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC), an all-college committee which will act as the central deliberative body for all policies and issues that are not the primary responsibility of the faculty. It will be chaired by the President, vice-chaired by an elected member of the faculty, and will be broadly representative. See Section IV.
- The primary link between the faculty and the all-college committees will be provided by a new committee, the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC), which will replace CFG but have responsibilities beyond those now overseen by CFG. FEC will oversee faculty involvement in all-college governance, will have strong representation on the new IPPC, will oversee faculty governance and will observe the on-campus meetings of the Board of Trustees. See Section V.

Please see the Overview at the end of this report.

III. Faculty Committees

A. *Faculty Committees that will not change*

Committees in the current governance system whose functions are the primary responsibility of the faculty will not, in general, be altered. CFG believes that all of the following committees fall in that category, that each of them performs an important function that requires substantial faculty involvement, and finally that each of them functions quite well:

Committee on Appointments, Promotion & Tenure (CAPT)
Tenure Review Board (TRB) & Tenure Appeal Committee (TAC)
Committee on Educational Policy and Planning (CEPP)
Curriculum Committee
Honors Council
Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights (CAFR)
Faculty Development Committee (FDC)
Athletic Council
University Without Walls Committee (UWWC, elected faculty reduced to 4)
External Master of Arts Committee (EMAC – elected faculty reduced to 4)
Committee on Academic Standing (CAS- appointed)

B. Faculty Committees that would change

Some committees currently designated as faculty committees do not seem to CFG to fall in the “primary responsibility of the faculty” category (or will be subsumed in the reorganization). We therefore propose removing those committees from the category of faculty committees. These are listed below with their proposed fates in parentheses:

- CFG (Subsumed by FEC – see Section V)
- Committee on Admissions and Student Aid (CASA) (Becomes a subcommittee of IPPC)
- FPPC (Eliminated. Function taken over by IPPC and a subcommittee of IPPC)
- Institutional Planning Committee (IPC) (Becomes the all-college committee IPPC)
- Faculty Observers (Subsumed by FEC)
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Becomes an all-college committee)

IV. The New Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC)

The current Institutional Planning Committee has not functioned well for years, for a variety of reasons. One basic problem stems from its stated function, which is somewhat abstract at best (see Faculty Handbook, page 215: IPC function: Chaired by the President, shall engage in strategic, tactical, and environmental planning for educational, financial, and co-curricular affairs) .

CFG proposes that IPC become the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC) with the following function:

Proposed IPPC function: To act as the central deliberative body for all major institutional policies not under the primary responsibility of the faculty, and to conduct strategic planning for the College as a whole.

CFG envisions the new IPPC to be the centrally important committee in the all-college decision-making structure. It will sit just below the President and provide a forum in which representatives from all areas of the college can discuss and formulate policy recommendations directly to the President. Its proposed membership follows:

Proposed Membership of the IPPC:

- The President, Chair
- All members of the President’s Staff
- The Director of Institutional Research
- 3 elected faculty representatives, who also sit on the Faculty Executive Committee,
one of whom serves as Vice-Chair of IPPC
- The chair of CEPP (or his/her designee)
- 1 representative from the administrative/professional staff
- 1 representative from the support staff
- The President of SGA
- 1 additional student selected by SGA (16 members in total)

The IPPC will meet on a regular basis and at a designated time known to all members before their appointment to the committee. It will be chaired by the President, and, in the President's absence, by its faculty Vice-Chair. The agenda will be set by the President and faculty Vice-Chair in consultation with the President's Staff, FEC, and SGA. All significant institutional policy discussions and decisions, such as budget, benefits, changes in admissions policies, issues in advancement, among others, will come before the IPPC before the President makes the final decisions. This structure ensures that all constituencies (faculty via FEC and CEPP, administrative-professional and support staff members via their representatives, and students via SGA) are informed about the key issues facing the college and are able to provide input into decisions involving those issues before decisions are finalized.

V. The New Faculty Executive Committee

The proposed Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) will consist of nine members of the faculty: 6 elected for a three year terms and the 3 elected members of IPPC. Its function will be the following:

Proposed FEC Function: To act as the primary conduit of information and ideas into and out of the faculty for all issues and policies that are not the primary responsibility of the faculty, and to serve as overseer of the faculty governance system and observers of the Trustees.

The proposal seeks to bring together "under one roof" a group of faculty who will concentrate on institution-wide issues, will inform the faculty as a whole on those issues, and will be better represented in decision-making via its representation on the IPPC. This committee will have wide-ranging responsibilities, which is why CFG proposes that it be relatively large (nine members).

The three members of FEC who are elected to IPPC would have no additional duties on FEC beyond meeting with the committee. Each member elected to FEC (besides its chair) might sit on at most one other all-college committee or subcommittee of IPPC if FEC representation there seems appropriate. In addition, FEC may appoint willing and able faculty (not on FEC) to other available slots on all-college committees. In electing its representatives to FEC and IPPC, the faculty empowers FEC to oversee faculty involvement in the all-college governance system.

It is difficult to assess exactly how the number of faculty slots on faculty and all-college committees will work out as a result of this reorganization, but we can accurately count the number of elected slots since now all faculty committees except CAS will be elective and all all-college committees except IPPC will be appointive. With the reduction of EMAC and UWW to four faculty representatives, the numbers will be as follows:

New elective slots:
IPPC: 3
FEC: 6

Total new elective slots: 9

Eliminated elective slots:
FPPC : 4
CASA: 3
CFG: 6
Faculty Observers: 2
IPC: 2
ACC: 5
Benefits: 3
EMAC: 2
IRC 2
UWW 2

Total eliminated slots: 31

Net decrease in elected faculty committee slots: 22

This represents a decrease of 29%, from 75 elected slots to 53, but there may be some slight increase in the current 20 appointive slots as the all-college committee system evolves. It will be one of FEC's jobs to see that this appointive burden does not increase in a substantial way.

VI. Administrative-Professional Support-Staff Involvement in Governance

A nagging problem at Skidmore for some time has been that administrative professionals and support staff have no coherent input into or information channels about institutional issues and policies. The proposed representation of this group on the IPPC may help alleviate this situation to some extent since two representatives of this important constituency would be at the table when major issues are discussed and policies recommended. This, we believe, would be a step forward for a group which has traditionally been somewhat disenfranchised by the governance system. CFG encourages the President to discuss with appropriate parties how those representatives are to be selected, and whether further steps might be taken in this direction (for example, an administrative-professional support-staff executive committee, elected by its constituents, that would provide the representation of this group on IPPC, and would act as a conduit of information and ideas between the all-college governance system and that constituency).

VII. Yearly Elections and Appointments

The current annual system of four rounds of elections followed by an “omnibus” round of appointments can range from confusing at best to totally baffling or intimidating at worst. The proposed reorganization enables a significant simplification of this process to two election rounds, one held late in the fall and the other in the early spring, when faculty are beginning to plan their next academic year. Here is a possible arrangement:

Round I (Late fall): To be elected for three-year terms beginning in the fall:

IPPC	1 slot
CAPT	2 slots
CEPP	2 slots
CAFR	2 slots
FDC	2 slots
UWWC	2 slots

Round II (Early spring): To be elected for three-year terms beginning in the fall:

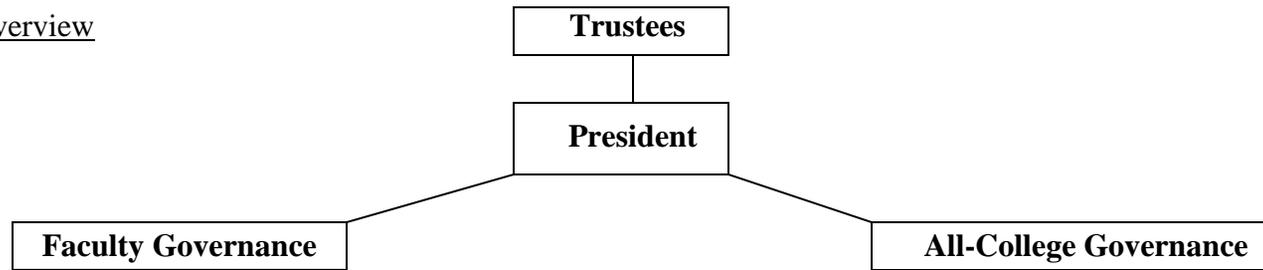
FEC	2 slots
TRB	1 slot
Curriculum	2 slots
Honors Council	1 slot
EMAC	2 slots
Athletic Council	1 slot

The all-college appointive committees will be constituted in mid spring in a single separate willingness-to-serve, as is currently done.

VIII. Summary

No governance system will ever be perfect. In this reorganization proposal CFG attempts to make our system leaner, more responsive, and more transparent while retaining the best of what we currently have. We do not wish to revise the parts of our system involving personnel policy and curricular issues, which have been so carefully thought out by this faculty over many years and which seem in general to work very well. However, it is clear that the present system is seen as too large and in some respects inefficient. We propose here a change which would clearly delineate what business is truly faculty business and what is not, and which would streamline the faculty’s involvement in the latter category to achieve more coherent, effective input into and communication about that kind of business. We believe that the redesigned system can provide greater coherence and effectiveness not just for the faculty but for the College as a whole.

Reorganization overview



- Central deliberative body: The Faculty Meeting
- All faculty representatives (except to CAS) are elected; all committees are chaired by faculty
- Changes (Handbook Part Two) must be approved by the faculty
- Committees
 - Faculty Executive Committee (FEC)
 - Committee on Appointments, Promotion & Tenure (CAPT)
 - Tenure Review Board (TRB) & Tenure Appeal Committee (TAC)
 - Committee on Educational Policy and Planning (CEPP)
 - Curriculum Committee
 - Honors Council
 - Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights (CAFR)
 - Faculty Development Committee (FDC)
 - Athletic Council
 - University Without Walls Committee (UWWC)
 - External Master of Arts Committee (EMAC)
 - Committee on Academic Standing (CAS)

- Central deliberative body: Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC)
- All faculty representatives to all committees except IPPC are appointed by FEC
- Changes (Handbook Part Three) must be approved by FEC, IPPC & SGA
- Committees
 - IPPC* (elected)
 - Diversity and Affirmative Action (DAAC)
 - Honor Code Commission
 - Information Resources Council (IRC)
 - Integrity Board
 - Board of Appeals
 - Institutional Review Board (IRB)*
 - Animal Care and Use Committee
 - Safety in the Workplace Committee

* Formerly “Faculty” committees

A Possible Timetable for Governance Reorganization

Summer 2004:

- CFG readies the main reorganization legislation.
- The President discusses with appropriate parties the method of admin-prof-support staff representation on IPPC.
- IPC discusses appropriate subcommittee structures to replace FPPC, Benefits, CASA, and ACC.

October 2004:

- CFG presents the main reorganization proposal to the faculty.
- CFG organizes opportunities for discussion of the reorganization proposal.

November 2004:

- The Faculty votes on the reorganization.
- If the vote ratifies the new system, new Round I Election occurs for IPPC, CAPT, CEPP, CAFR, FDC, and UWWC.

February 2005:

- The new Round II Election occurs for FEC, Curriculum, TRB, Honors Council, EMAC, and Athletic Council.

March/April 2005:

- CFG runs willingness-to-serve on appointive committees.
- CFG meets with the newly elected members of FEC and the elected faculty members of IPC to prepare for the transition.
- CFG brings fully revised Handbook language to the faculty.

Summer/Fall 2005:

- The new system takes effect.